



Petition Period Opens for 2014 Ag Enterprise Areas

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Editors note: Although the petition deadline is not until March 31, 2014, the petitions typically require months to prepare.

MADISON – The petition period is now open for 2014 Agricultural Enterprise Area designation, which can provide tax credits for farmers, keep land in agriculture, and stimulate the local farm economy.

Agricultural enterprise areas, or AEAs, are blocks of land that are primarily in agricultural use, either for farming or for businesses that serve the farming sector. They are created when local governments together with at least five local landowners petition the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the department approves the designation.

AEA designation by itself does not limit land use within the area, or protect from encroaching development. It does allow farmers within the AEA to receive tax credits of \$5-\$10 per acre if they enter farmland preservation agreements with the department. The designation can also be used with local planning and zoning, conservation easements, ag economic development incentives and other tools to support farming and the local farm economy.

"AEAs are a great tool for local governments and their constituents to preserve and build our rural landscape," said Ben Brancel, Secretary of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "The process supports not only agricultural production, but the service and processing infrastructure that goes with crop and livestock production. AEAs allow for a whole range of things that local governments can do to map out a realistic plan to maintain their farming bases."

Petition materials, including detailed instructions and petition forms, are available online at <http://workinglands.wi.gov>. Completed petitions are due March 31, 2014. Petitions must be completed jointly by local landowners and local government officials. Prospective petitioners should notify the department of their intent to apply, so they can receive announcements of workshops or webinars to help them prepare their petitions.

Agriculture supports 1 in 10 jobs in Wisconsin, and is a \$59.6 billion industry. DATCP may designate up to 250,000 acres around the state in 2014, which would bring the total acreage in AEAs to 1 million. The first four rounds of petitions have led to designating 25 AEAs totaling about 750,000 acres in 19 counties, 72 towns, and one reservation.

For more information, farmers and local government officials should call Coreen Fallat at 608-224-4625 or email DATCPWorkingLands@wisconsin.gov.

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